

Please **cancel** claim 23 without prejudice.

Please **amend** claims 1, 8, and 16 as follows and please **add** claims 24-28 as follows.

1. (Twice Amended) A method of activating a mechanism, wherein a force required to activate the mechanism varies between a minimum force and a maximum force in relation to the time since the mechanism was last activated, the method comprising:

applying an electrical current to a solenoid having an armature extending therefrom, wherein the armature is movable between a first position and a second position and wherein the electrical current of the solenoid causes the armature to exert an armature force, in the first position the armature is spaced apart from and does not contact the mechanism and in the second position the armature contacts the mechanism:

delaying, after applying the electrical current to the solenoid, the movement of the armature from the first position to the second position, with a force significantly greater than under normal operating conditions, until such time as the armature force is greater than the maximum force necessary to activate the mechanism; and

impacting the mechanism with the armature after the armature has kinetic energy.

8. (Twice Amended) A solenoid assembly, for use in activating a mechanism, wherein a force required to activate said mechanism varies between a minimum force and a maximum force in relation to the time since said mechanism was last activated, said solenoid assembly comprising:

a solenoid having an armature extending therefrom, wherein said armature moves between a first position and a second position, in the first position the armature is spaced apart from and does not contact the mechanism and in the second position the armature is positioned to contact the mechanism, wherein when an electrical current is applied to said solenoid, said solenoid causes said armature to exert an armature force; and

3 a delay member for delaying the movement of said armature, wherein after the initiation of an electrical current to said solenoid said delay member delays the movement of said armature from said first position to said second position, with a force significantly greater than under normal operating conditions, until such time as said armature exhibits an armature force greater than said maximum force necessary to activate said mechanism.

16. (Twice Amended) A solenoid assembly, for use in activating a mechanism wherein a force required to activate said mechanism varies in relation to the time since said mechanism was last activated, said solenoid assembly comprising:

3 a solenoid having an armature extending therethrough, wherein said armature moves between a first position and an second position, in the first position the armature is spaced apart from and does not contact the mechanism and in the second position the armature is positioned to contact the mechanism, wherein when an electrical current is applied to said solenoid, said solenoid causes said armature to exert an armature force; and

a delay member for delaying the movement of said armature, wherein after the initiation of an electrical current to said solenoid said delay member delays the movement of said armature from said first position to said second position, with a force significantly greater than under normal operating conditions, until said armature exhibits a preselected armature force, necessary to activate said mechanism.

24. (Newly Added) The method of claim 1, wherein delaying the movement of the armature and impacting the mechanism with the armature provide mechanism activation times consistent to within one millisecond.

25. (Newly Added) The method of claim 1, wherein delaying the movement of the armature and impacting the mechanism with the armature provide mechanism activation times consistent to within two-tenths of a millisecond.

26. (Newly Added) The method of claim 1, wherein delaying the movement of the armature and impacting the mechanism with the armature provide mechanism activation substantially at a predefined time after the beginning of an ac power cycle.

27. (Newly Added) The method of claim 1, wherein delaying the movement of the armature and impacting the mechanism with the armature provide consistent mechanism activation within one millisecond of a predefined time after the beginning of an ac power cycle.

28. (Newly Added) The method of claim 1, wherein delaying the movement of the armature and impacting the mechanism with the armature provide consistent mechanism activation within about two-tenths of a millisecond of a predefined time after the beginning of an ac power cycle.

REMARKS

Claims 1-23 were pending as of the date of the current office action. Claims 8-11, 13-14, 16-18, and 20-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,008,876 to Bastle, hereinafter "Bastle." Claims 1, 2, 5, and 6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Bastle. Claims 3, 4, 12, 19, and 23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Bastle in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,713,639 to Grunert et al., hereinafter "Grunert." Claims 7, 15, and 22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Bastle in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,062,052 to Harper et al., hereinafter "Harper."

Applicant appreciates examiner's telephonic interview of February 10, 2003. While no agreement was reached, applicant believes the amendments contained herein place the application in condition for allowance.

Claim 23 has been canceled. Claims 1, 8, and 16 have been amended. Claims 24-28 have been newly added. Support for the amendments can be found in the specification as